



California State Assembly

V. MANUEL PÉREZ

ASSEMBLYMEMBER, 80TH DISTRICT

Dear Friend:

Bicycle riding is a fun family activity, but it does involve risk. Children, in particular, are susceptible to accidents and injury, as they are still developing the necessary coordination and judgment. In fact, bicycles are associated with more childhood injuries than any other consumer product except the automobile.

According to safety experts, the single most effective safety device available to reduce head injury and death from bicycle crashes is a helmet. Helmet use reduces the risk of bicycle-related death and injury and the severity of head injury when a crash occurs.

To increase the use of helmets and thereby reduce harm and injury to young people, California law now requires *all* children and youth under age 18 to wear a helmet while bicycling.

This brochure was created to inform you of the law and to provide you with information regarding helmets and their proper use. If you have any questions regarding California's helmet safety law, or if I can be of help with another matter, please call my office at (760) 342-8047.

Sincerely,

V. MANUEL PÉREZ
Assemblymember, 80th District



Courtesy of
V. Manuel Pérez
Assemblymember, 80th District

DISTRICT OFFICE:

45-677 Oasis Street
Indio, CA 92201
(760) 342-8047
Fax: (760) 347-8704

IMPERIAL VALLEY OFFICE:

1450 South Imperial Avenue
El Centro, CA 92243
(760) 336-8912
Fax: (760) 336-8914

CAPITOL OFFICE:

State Capitol
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249-0080
(916) 319-2080
Fax: (916) 319-2180

E-MAIL:

Assemblymember.Manuel.Perez@assembly.ca.gov

WEB SITE:

www.asm.ca.gov/mperez

ASSEMBLY WEB SITE:

www.asm.ca.gov

bicycle helmet safety



California's Bicycle Helmet Safety Law

"The first automobile crash in the United States occurred in New York City in 1896, when a motor vehicle collided with a pedalcycle rider."

— Famous First Facts, by Joseph Kane

california's bicycle helmet law

The California Bicycle Helmet Safety Law requires all children under the age of 18 to wear an approved safety helmet when riding a bicycle on public streets or trails. The law also applies to bicycle passengers.

Violations

A violation of the law is an infraction with a maximum fine of \$25. However, first time offenses can be dismissed. Under the law, 72.5 % of the revenues from the fines go to county health departments to be used for bicycle safety education and to help low-income families obtain helmets for their children.

Helmet Standards

Safety helmets must meet the standards of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), the American Society for Testing Materials (ASTM), or the Snell Memorial Foundation's Standard for Protective Headgear for Use in Bicycling, simply known as SNELL.

bicycle helmet safety tips

Do I need a helmet?

According to SafeKidsUSA, head injury is the number-one cause of death in bicycle crashes and is the most important determinant of bicycle-related death and permanent disability. Head injuries account for more than 60 % of bicycle-related deaths, more than two-thirds of bicycle-related hospital admissions, and about one-third of hospital emergency room visits for bicycling injuries. Riding without a bicycle helmet significantly increases your risk of sustaining a head injury in the event of a crash. Non-helmeted riders are 14 times more likely to be involved in a fatal crash than helmeted riders. The single most effective safety device available to reduce head



injury and death from bicycle crashes is a helmet. Helmet use reduces the risk of bicycle-related death and injury and the severity of head injury when a crash occurs. Unfortunately, it is estimated that helmet use among children ranges only from 15 to 25 %. Studies find that children are more likely to wear a bicycle helmet if riding with others (friends or adults) who are also wearing one. In other words, adults who wear helmets not only help protect themselves from harm but also set a powerful example.

Do toddlers or young children need a helmet?

A child of any age needs head protection when riding. However, a small child's neck muscles may not be able to support the weight of a helmet. If you are in doubt, take the child and the helmet to a pediatrician for advice. If the helmet is too heavy, a child may simply be too young for bicycling. The helmet should cover as much of the child's head as possible, sit level on the head and fit securely when the strap is fastened.

How does a helmet work?

A bicycle helmet reduces the peak energy in a sharp impact. This requires a layer of stiff foam to cushion the blow. The helmet must stay on the rider's head even though the rider may be hit more than once — usually by a car first, then the road. The helmet should not come off the head by any combination of pulling or twisting.

What type do I need?

Choose a helmet with a smooth plastic outer shell so it cannot snag on pavement or other objects in a crash. Avoid extensive vents since they provide less foam contact with the head in a crash, which could concentrate force on one point of the skull. Any attachments such as a mirror or visor should have break-away mounts, otherwise they may cause further injury.

What safety standards should I look for in a helmet?

Look for a standards sticker inside the helmet. All safety helmets sold in California must meet the standards of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), the American Society for Testing Materials (ASTM) or the Snell Memorial Foundation's Standard for Protective Headgear for Use in Bicycling (SNELL). According to safety groups, the best helmet today that provides the greatest coverage and protection carries the Snell B-95 sticker. If you use any add-on accessories you should examine them carefully and consider what they might do to you in a crash.

How much does a typical helmet cost?

Helmets are available in bicycle shops and other retailers starting at about \$20; they can be found in some discount stores for as little as \$10, and in thrift stores for even less. However, a range of prices exists, depending on the style and materials used. Some helmets can cost up to \$120.

What should I look for when I buy a helmet?

Look for the safety standards sticker. Choose a bright color on the outside. Put it on, adjust the straps, and then try to tear it off. A good fit should remain level on the head and not tilt more than one inch or two in any direction, which ensures that the helmet will be in place if a crash occurs. Look for vents and sweat-control devices. Inspect the strap buckle for long-term durability. The Internet has a wealth of information related to bicycle helmets, what to look for, and how to fit them. For example, visit the Bicycle Helmet Safety Institute at www.bhsi.org or search for "bicycle helmet" at www.consumerreports.org for helpful information.

When must I replace a helmet?

Replace any helmet that has been in a crash. Impact crushes some of the foam and it can no longer protect your head if it is hit again. Replace the strap buckle if it cracks or a piece breaks off. Most manufacturers recommend helmet replacement after five years.

How do I get my child to wear his/her helmet?

Let your child pick out the helmet. Help your child learn to use the buckle. Help your child practice until he or she can buckle them easily. Insist your child always wears the helmet when riding. Firm rules are usually needed for any safety practice. When you ride together, wear your own helmet. Your own good example can make a big difference in encouraging your child to wear one. Praise and reward your child each time. You can take away some of the discomfort of wearing a helmet with words of support. Begin the helmet habit with the first bicycle. It will then become a natural habit as your child grows. Encourage other parents to wear helmets.

